

FITNESSGRAM

Exemptions for Students with Disabilities

Question and Answer Information

The Texas Education Code (TEC) permits an exemption for students with disabilities from participating in the physical fitness assessment. The specific Texas Administrative Code (TAC) and TEC regulations are provided in the links below.

A student can be completely or partially exempted from the (six) test items required for assessment with the FITNESSGRAM assessment instrument based on the conditions of their disability. There is no requirement to indicate these exemptions in the software or to the agency. If the student completes some, but not all, of the test items based on a restriction from particular types of physical activity, those test items that the student completes should be entered into the FITNESSGRAM software. The test items that are not completed should be left blank. Blank entries will not count against a student or school's overall percentages. The agency will only see aggregated data that reflects the test items that were completed. To protect confidentiality, there will be no indication of test items not completed for a specific student.

All students, regardless of a disability, should be included but it is inappropriate to enter scores into the FITNESSGRAM software unless you feel that it is fair to judge a child against the regular FITNESSGRAM standards. Modifying the test items when necessary to provide an opportunity for students to participate in a safe and relevant manner is recommended, but the data resulting from these modifications should not be entered into the software or submitted to the agency. It is recommended that the district maintain this information.

Questions and Answers:

1. Does this mean that all students with disabilities are exempt from the FITNESSGRAM?

No; the majority of students with disabilities will be able to participate in the FITNESSGRAM without accommodations or modifications to the assessment. Some students with disabilities will require accommodations or modifications to the assessment based on the individual student's disability, but many will be able to participate without any accommodations or modifications. Only students (with or without disabilities) who have been "restricted" in accordance with TAC §74.31, shall not participate in the administration of the FITNESSGRAM.

2. What actions should a school take when a student can participate in the FITNESSGRAM if provided appropriate accommodations or modifications to the assessment?

School personnel should exercise good judgment when including students with disabilities in the FITNESSGRAM. If the student is considered "unrestricted" in accordance with TAC §74.31, then the student must be administered the FITNESSGRAM in the same manner as any other student. There is no need for a meeting of the Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee if a student with disabilities is participating in the regular physical fitness assessments without accommodations. However, if school personnel and/or the parent believe the student will require certain accommodations or modifications to participate, then an ARD committee may need to be convened to consider accommodations or modifications to the assessment based on the individual student's disability. ARD committees should consider the student's participation in the FITNESSGRAM in the same manner as they consider other required state assessments.

3. What if an Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee determines that some items in the FITNESSGRAM are not appropriate for individual students with a disability?

The student's IEP should include a statement explaining why the child cannot participate in test items that are determined by the ARD committee to be inappropriate.

4. What if a student's disability is of sufficient severity to make it dangerous or impossible for the student to participate in any portion of the FITNESSGRAM?

Assessment using the FITNESSGRAM will be inappropriate for some students with significant disabilities. Documentation for excluding the student should be maintained by the district. In the future it may be or may not be necessary for schools to administer an alternative assessment for a student on an individual basis. The Agency will provide information regarding this issue at a later date.

There are no other permissible exemptions for this state regulation. It is critical that those administering the assessment communicate the importance of student health. To merely state that it is a requirement without teaching the value of the assessment will potentially lead to student disinterest and parent discontent.

5. If a student has already been determined by an ARD to have restricted physical education/activity, is it necessary to have the ARD to go back to make a determination of participation in fitness assessments?

If the ARD committee has already outlined a student's restriction from physical activity to address the existing curriculum requirements and the guidance provided is sufficient to address the physical fitness assessment, there is no need for the ARD to meet again to address this specific issue.

6. Are there methods to garner support from students and parents?

- Share with parents and students that the data will be utilized to improve curriculum, direct resources and, provide opportunities for students to improve their own health.
- Send a letter home to parents to communicate the requirements and the importance of this initiative before the test is facilitated.
- Share the "parent report" and "student report" (both generated by the software at no cost) voluntarily when the assessment is complete.
- Share research and articles with students and parents that describe the positive effects on students for taking care of their health, such improved performance, concentration, and attendance rates.
- Host an assembly for students and/or a family fitness night to share these insights and demonstrate the test protocols.

New state laws allow teachers to begin a very important dialogue with students, their families, and the community. It is important for students of all ages to receive this message, including those not in a physical education class or those preparing to leave home after graduation. Students and parents who are provided with this information prior to test administration will likely be more supportive of this state mandate. Although these expectations will need to be communicated regularly for the next several years, support for this initiative will be stronger as the benefits become realized.

[TEC § 38.101. ASSESSMENT REQUIRED.](#)

[TAC §74.31. Health Classifications for Physical Education.](#)

[Sec. 104.002. HEALING ART. Sec. 104.003. REQUIRED IDENTIFICATION.](#)

Districts are encouraged to consider the guidance from the Texas Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (TAHPERD) regarding adaptive physical education as indicated by ARD committee recommendations. This guidance is available at: http://www.tahperd.org/LINKS/links_physical_ed.html.